DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 039 223 TE 001 747

AUTHOR Eash, Maurice J.
TITLE Toward a More Viable System of Supervision.
INSTITUTION New York State English Council, Oswego.
PUB DATE Oct 69
NOTE 10p.
JOURNAL CIT English Record; v20 n1 p79-86 Oct 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Observation Techniques, *Curriculum Design, Curriculum Planning, Educational Change, Instructional Design, Leadership, Observation, Relevance (Education), *Supervisor Qualifications, *Supervisory Activities, *Supervisory Training, Systems Analysis

ABSTRACT

Although the role of the supervisor in education is seriously being challenged by complicated social forces, and the traditional method of simply observing or inspecting classroom performance has lacked guiding conceptual frameworks, the solution does not lie in the election of supervisory representatives or committees, but rather in an intensive reconsideration of supervision. To achieve a comprehensive curriculum design that brings the personal demands of students into greater congruence with the needs of society, the reform of supervisory education must include proficiency in three areas of knowledge: the technical skills of macro- and micro-curriculum design, the theory and practice of implementation of change in human organization, and the substance and techniques of systems analysis. Organization development--the fusion of these three areas on a practical problem--is needed on several fronts. A supervisor with extensive preparation in his subject area will hopefully have acquired, through field preparation, such crucial skills as analyzing functions, improving communication, resolving conflict, and facilitating leadership and change within groups. (MF)

The English Record; Vol. 20, No. 1, October 1969

TOWARD A MORE VIABLE SYSTEM OF SUPERVISION

Maurice J. Eash

The present position of the supervisor in our schools is basically an unenviable one. Always a man in the organizational middle, be he chairman of a department, principal, or general subject supervisor, he is now overtaken in his functional role by a series of social forces which plague the lives of all those in authority.[1] Occupying a platform of uncertain professional status, performing vaguely defined duties, and evoking a dubious authority, the supervisor has become a source of conflict and an object of derision, reaching a state where his very existence in the scheme of education may be questioned.[2] How supervision arrived at this juncture, what some of the unresolved issues are that have blocked its development, and whether there are grounds for believing an adequate conceptual basis for the practice of supervision will emerge are questions that those who see supervision as a viable force in the improvement of instruction must confront.[3] The purpose of this paper is to assist in screening some of these issues and to examine alternatives that offer promise for supervision to attain professional stature.

There is general agreement that supervision had its beginnings in the need to upgrade ill prepared teachers. Thus an assumption was spawned that the supervisor was a superior with greater knowledge than the classroom teacher. Consequently, the early texts on supervision were compendiums of methods of observing and inspecting classroom performance. The practices still exist and still have their advocates. A multitude of written classroom observations dutifully filed and largely forgotten each school year document what I have just asserted.[4] In analyzing a number of supervisory reports of classroom observations conducted in a large city system recently, I was singularly impressed by the lack of a conceptual framework to guide the observations, especially the dearth of basic knowledge of behavioral science approaches which would lend consistency and predictability to

ED039223

TE001 745

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY New York State English Council TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Maurice J. Eash is a member of the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

observations of human behavior. Moreover there was no evidence of the most fundamental precautions against observer bias; nothing even as obvious as multiple independent observations by two or more supervisors and a complete ruling out of the newer techniques of videotapes, interaction analysis and so on. These and other observations of supervisor's performance lead me to conclude that in practice supervision is still entrenched in the historical anachronisms of apprentice and master relationships and an inherited primitivism of what human interaction is, virtually ignoring the research in the behavioral sciences on conditions for generating human productivity.

This is a harsh indictment. But an understanding of the deficits of the field is necessary if one is to make sense of the data on the demise of the status of supervisors and their attendant limited effectiveness in instructional improvement.[5] In an age when all authority is challenged, the supervisor who has little technical competence and must rely on an arbitrary authority derived from a status position to effect instructional improvement is particularly vulnerable, and in a time of tightening budgets, expendable. All professions have ultimately staked their claim for authority on a technical competency brought to bear on matters of import to the public.[6] The evidence is unclear but the trend indicaes that supervision has not established that its practices are based on a body of esoteric knowledge necessary to its practice that is not already within the purview of most classroom practitioners.

There is a quality of irony in the current attacks on supervisors, the demand for their removal from the educational picture and their replacement by elected representatives and committees. In contrast to the evidence of antique, sterile practice there is parallel evidence of a reawakening of broad interest in the area resulting in a new body of literature and research investigations that can provide a platform for projecting programs of supervisor development that are vast improvements over the old. These data contain the theoretical conceptual framework that could provide a basis for a new supervision, one equipped to grapple with educational problems whose resolution are crucial if the school is to be a significant social organization in the culture. Therefore the concern for professionalization of supervision and upgrading the effectiveness of supervisors is one with developing the technical skills and competencies of the field. If this path to professional improvement is chosen, then certification and graduate programs become of focal interest, for pro-

fessional improvement is chosen, then certification and graduate programs become of focal interest, for professionalization implies that the certified professional comes with a degree of special competence which has customarily been developed through rigorous academic training. Prior to describing a program there is need to ask if supervisors have a special role to play. Can they be prepared to assume this role? What might be the components of a graduate program? Where does certification fit into the picture? These questions will be our concern in the remainder of this paper.

Contrary to much current criticism, the rate of growth of the supervisory force is greater than the rate of growth of the recruitment of classroom teachers.[7] Despite an ill defined functional role, there evidently exists an impression among some educators that supervisors do contribute to the improvement of instruction and are a necessary human resource. A perusal of graduate programs and a survey of job descriptions and of certification requirements of supervisors do not reflect much consistency in what supervision is.[8] The typical graduate course for preparing supervisors has often been an appendage of programs in administration, relegating formal academic work to a course or two which are descriptive and non-theoretical. These lack depth in the research in human organization and behavior. Is there a special role that supervisors should play in the educational program as a whole?

As a member of the ASCD's Commission on Professionalization of Supervisors and Curriculum Workers and having studied this issue for four years I came to an affirmative conclusion. Noting the data on youth and curriculum problems that are being manifest in many contexts and the categorical rejection of the school's offerings, I have become aware of an area of need for an educational program that is a workable social system, contributing both to the culture and to human need. The failure of attention to total program and its impact on student experience has produced a vertiginous curriculum design lacking form and pattern, fragmented and fraught with internal contradictions, and relying too often upon political log-rolling as the main vehicle for curriculum development. When the present curriculum design is viewed as a social system directed toward producing a proper relationship between the student and his culture, the outcome for large numbers of students can only be pronounced a failure. Moreover, recent developments in high schools

suggest that as a consequence student militancy may decree that our present dysfunctional design may no longer be capable of implementation even though supported by the police. Thus the production of a comprehensive curriculum design that brings into greater congruence personal demands of students and needs of society is a major breech in the educational spectrum that is not being filled and presents an area for a major contribution from supervisory practice.

To contribute to a resolution of these critical problems the supervisor will need to become proficient in three areas of knowledge: (1) the technical skills of macro- and micro-curriculum design, (2) the theory and practice of implementation of change in human organization, and (3) the substance and techniques of systems analysis. Fusing these three areas together on a practical problem is called organization development. As with most areas of human endeavor we have access to more knowledge than we practice; the immediate task is to move an accumulating body of knowledge on macro- and micro-curriculum design into the current school program. Such an effort must move simultaneously on several fronts. However, our present concern will be casting of a graduate program which prepares potential and practicing supervisors with the three areas of knowledge, and procedures of certification which will enhance the probabilities that supervisors have the basic competencies for effective organization development. Before outlining a graduate program, I shall define briefly the four key terms: *macro-curriculum design, micro-curriculum design, systems analysis, and organization development.*

A macro-curriculum design is a configuration of a total curriculum satisfying the four principal constructs of a curriculum design's objectives, content selection (including scope and sequence), modes of transaction (frequently labeled methodology), and evaluation. The macro design is specifically concerned with the organization, interrelation and effect of the four constructs and their impact on the student's experience. Therefore all the planned student experiences in the school are included in the macro design.

A micro-curriculum design is concerned with the small sub systems of the macro design, and is sometimes referred to as instructional design. The micro-curriculum design is most commonly used in lessons or units, and is also organized around the four constructs of: objectives, content, modes of transaction, and evaluation but receives different treatment than in a macro design. Currently, a micro design gives attention to stating objectives in behavioral terms, selecting related modes of trans-

action appropriate to specific learners and providing formative as well as end product evaluaton.

Organization development often shortened to OD is a process of working for organizational change and development in a way that welds human needs and organizational goals into a mutually beneficial cooperative enterprise. The National Training Laboratory lists as some of the underlying hypotheses of OD:

———Work which is organized to meet people's needs as well as to achieve organizational requirements tends to produce the highest productivity and quality of production.

———Individuals whose basic needs are satisfied do not seek a soft and secure environment. They are interested in work, challenge, and responsibility.

———People have a drive toward growth and self-realization.

———Persons in groups which go through a managed process of increasing openness about both positive and negative feelings develop a strong identification with the goals of the group and its other members. The group becomes increasingly capable of dealing constructively with potentially disruptive issues.

———Personal growth is facilitated by a relationship which is honest, caring, and nonmanipulative.

———Positive change flows naturally from groups which feel a common identification and an ability to influence their environment.[9]

Systems analysis, the third area of knowledge, is a method of dealing with broad scale intricate problems through essentially analyzing system problems into a number of subsystems, projecting alternatives and seeking resolution within the larger system's goals.[10] Systems analysis approaches are particularly applicable to supervision focused on instructional improvement directed to the need to bring the macro and micro designs into harmony, thus reducing the fragmentation of experience which has plagued our students in the present curriculum. As one rather obvious illustration of a systems analysis approach, the teaching of written communication would be a task for all subsystems of the school and not the specific responsibility of the English department, though they might assume some responsibility for evaluation and coordination.

Space and time does not permit an extended treatment of the specifics of a graduate program for supervisors which combines these three areas of knowlegde into a model for applied instructional improvement, nevertheless I shall briefly sketch the pa-

rameters. One assumption upon which this description is predicated is that the potential supervisor has or is obtaining depth preparation in the subject field. Further the academic and field preparation would entail a program of studies of one to two years beyond the master's degree.

In the area of macro and micro curriculum design course work ought to include: (1) the theory and knowledge of alternative macro and micro designs from structured disciplines to unstructured experiences, (2) critical investigation of the literature and basic research in each of the constructs of objectives, content selection, modes of transaction (methodology and evaluation) and (3) procedures for analyzing, building and testing macro and micro designs. For example some questions which would be pursued in formal course work and field experience in the construct might be: What objectives do we accept for a macro design in what priority? If objectives are set forth in behavioral terms does this detrimentally structure the modes of transaction? What criteria does a teacher use to select appropriate objectives in a micro design?

The area of knowledge encompassing the theory and practice of implementation of change requires a different approach to instruction than has been typically followed in graduate programs. Of fundamental importance for the potential supervisor is the acquisition of such technical skills as: (1) analyzing organization functioning, (2) improving group and individual communication, (3) handling and resolving conflict, (4) generating a climate for change, (5) assessing change, (6) facilitating and supporting leadership behavior. The instruction in this phase of preparation should be conducted in a behavioral laboratory setting, using simulation exercises and games as the primary modes of transaction.[11] Emphasis would be placed on attitudinal objectives as well as cognitive objectives for the student. From experience with my own graduate students I have found especially helpful much of the work that has been done in industry by social psychologists like Argyris, Beckhard and Likert.[12] Moreover a classroom must become a laboratory where students can repeatedly practice these skills and techniques.

Systems analysis which binds these two areas together need not be taught as a separate course but can be brought into the other two areas as needed. A sampling of some of the major

concepts which are valuable to supervisors as they work on curriculum development are: (1) procedures for analyzing systems and defining subsystems, a specific question that a supervisor might want answered through systems analysis might be what are the dominant factors influencing instruction and which would be most likely to respond to change, (2) the development of simulation and operational gaming to introduce change and assess its impact, (3) scenario writing, a method where one starts with a given set of conditions and works out the various alternatives and projects consequences, (4) the use of iteration in problem solving,[13] a procedure whereby a problem is cycled through a series of steps which forestall the chances of premature closure and acceptance of inadequate solutions, and (5) trade-off analysis, a method of examining alternatives in an overall scheme ordered for certain goals. How much time and effort should be expended on redesigning the present English curriculum or should a new curriculum receive the major effort, is a question which would lend itself to trade-off analysis.[14]

With these brief descriptions and accompanying examples of the three areas of knowledge which hold promise of providing a basis for a viable system of supervision, let us examine the problem of certification and its contribution in the framework of upgrading and improving supervisory personnel. Earlier it was suggested that if supervision is to obtain a respected position as a profession it must guarantee a minimal technical competence in the certified practitioner. Therefore this model of certification is similar in a sense to an evaluation model, securing data which would provide a substantive basis for a judgment of competence. Such a model would in my opinion be far superior to the courses and approved program arrangements, offering a more definitive estimate of quality control. A model now under development at the University of Illinois Medical School is attempting to improve the quality of the training program for medical students and would be one that supervision programs might well emulate in their initial attempts.[15] The essential components of the model are: empirical determination of the factors in professonal competence—i.e. what can and should a professional do when faced

with a problem in the professional area; simulation techniques to supplement more conventional paper and pencil evaluations, i.e. putting the students in problem situations; using pre-established criteria established by experts instead of group norms for passing or failing; and using evaluation data to improve the program. With such a model, certification would be met at least partially by passing tests of competency administered at the state level by a board of professionals composed of supervisors. The main guideline for the certification process would be the providing of knowledgeable, competent practitioners. Other parts of the certification process might be carried out in the preparing institution subject to rigorous outside evaluaton. I am persuaded that we have available to us ways of assessing competence. The future of supervision may hinge upon whether we choose to face up to using them.

The role of the supervisor and many of the other traditional authority positions in education are seriously challenged by complicated social forces. While the erosion of these traditional structures is rapidly undercutting their effectiveness, a lack of adequate replacements is of profound discomfort to those who recognize that anarchy may be romantic, but has little to recommend is as a social system within which individuals can realize their potentialities. Our best hope lies in using reason and research to find answers to the problems that foster unrest. In this paper I have suggested tasks proper for supervision and programs for preparing supervisors who can contribute to the school's becoming a more viable social institution in our culture. In fulfilling this obligation supervision could have no higher calling.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert A. Nisbet in an article "The Twilight of Authority," The Public Interest 15: 3-9; Spring 1969 presents an insightful analysis of the challenge to authority and the resultant shift of public opinion to supporting raw power to avoid anarchy.

[2]Maurice J. Eash, "Supervisors: A Vanishing Breed?" Educational Leadership 26 (2): 73-79; 1968.

[3]A study which documents the persistence of a practice in education to the point of becoming a ritual, see James Hoetker and William P. Ahlbrand, Jr. "The Persistence of the Recitation." American Educational Research Journal, 6(2): 145-167.

[4]In a recent review of research on supervision, classroom observation and classroom visiting still appear to be the most common activities of supervisors. James E. Heald. "Supervision," Encyclopedia of Educational Research. The Macmillan Company, Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1969. pp. 1394-1400.

[5]Kimball Wiles, "Supervision." Encyclopedia of Educational Research, The Macmillan Company, 1960. pp. 1444-1445.

[6]Everett C. Hughes. "Professions," Daedalus 92:(4) p. 655.

[7]NEA Research Report 1967-R 19, "Estimates of School Statistics" 1967-68. National Education Association, p. 12.

[8]H. Irene Hallberg, "Certification Requirements for General Supervisors and/or Curriculum Workers Today-Tomorrow," Educational Leadership 23(2): 623-625.

[9]NTL Institute: News and Reports, "What is OD?" 2:(3). National Training Laboratory, unpaged.

[10]Gerald Rabow, The Era of the System. Philosophical Library, 1969. p. 2.

[11]An excellent description of the techniques of gaming and a range of examples can be found in Eliot Carlson's Learning Through Games. Public Affairs Press, 1969.

[12]Some examples of the specific writings that I have found most helpful and directly applicable to supervision are: Chris Argyris. "On the Future of Laboratory Education," The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 3(2): pp. 153-183; Richard Beckhard. "The Confrontation Meeting," Harvard Business Review 15(2) pp. 149-155, 1967; and Rensis Likert. The Human Organization: Its Management and Value. McGraw-Hill, 1967.

[13]E.S. Quade defines iteration as a ten step cycling process used in problem solving. The ten steps are selecting objectives, designing alternatives, collecting data, building models, weighing cost against effectiveness, testing for sensitivity, questioning assumptionos, reexamining objectives, opening new alternatives and formulating the problem. See E. S. Quade. "Systems Analysis Techniques for Planning--Programming--Budgeting." Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, March 1966, p. 8-11.

[14]A first rate introduction to systems analysis giving a balanced presentation of its strength and weakness especially as they relate to social systems problems is Robert Boguslaw: The New Utopians. A Study of System Design and Social Change. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1965.

[15]Christine H. McGuire, "An Evaluation Model for Professional Education-Medical Education." Proceedings of the 1967 Invitational Conference on Testing Problems, Educational Testing Service, 1968. pp. 37-52.